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## State lawmakers are pushing to curb governors' virus powers

By DAVID A. LIEB  
Associated Press

Irritated by the sweeping use of executive orders during the COVID-19 crisis, state lawmakers around the U.S. are moving to curb the authority of governors and top health officials to impose emergency restrictions such as mask rules and business shutdowns. The push is underway in such states as Arizona, Michigan, Ohio, Maryland, Kentucky, Indiana and Pennsylvania, where legislators are seeking a constitutional amendment to strip the governor of many of his emergency powers.

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In this Dec. 10, 2020, file photo, Ainsley O'Donnell, 15, of Moscow, Pa., works out in preparation for softball season at NEPA Fit Club in Blakely, Pa.

Associated Press



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# State lawmakers are pushing to curb governors' virus powers



Jeff Fitter, owner of Super Smokers BBQ, poses for a photo inside his restaurant Thursday, Jan. 28, 2021, in Eureka, Mo.

Associated Press

**Continued from Front**

Pennsylvania Republican Sen. Wayne Langerholc said the amendment would "make it unequivocally clear that our General Assembly is a co-equal branch ... that we are not a monarchy and that our voices matter."

Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf and some of his counterparts around the country have argued that they need authority to act quickly and decisively against the fast-changing threat.

The coronavirus has killed an estimated 430,000 Americans and is going through its most lethal phase yet, despite the roll-out of vaccines, with new and more contagious variants from abroad turning up in the U.S.

State legislatures generally took on lesser roles after the pandemic hit, with many suspending work or adjourning. It has been governors or their top health officials who have set many of the policies — imposing mask mandates, limiting public gatherings and shutting down dine-in restau-

rants, gyms, hair salons and other businesses.

Lawmakers in more than half the states have filed bills this year to limit gubernatorial powers during the pandemic and other emergencies, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Most legislatures began their sessions this month.

Kentucky's Republican-led Legislature could consider as soon as next week whether to override Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear's vetoes of several bills that would rein in his emergency powers.

Wisconsin's GOP-controlled Senate voted earlier this week to repeal Democratic Gov. Tony Evers' emergency health order, which would end the state's mask mandate. The Republican-controlled Assembly called off a similar vote Thursday in the face of criticism from health, school and business leaders and concern that it could jeopardize more than \$49 million in federal aid.

Wisconsin Republicans have argued that Evers exceeded his authority by issuing multiple emergency

declarations during the pandemic, which enabled him to extend the mask mandate beyond the 60 days allowed under the law without getting the Legislature's approval.

Evers contends that the changing nature of the pandemic warranted new emergency declarations.

The amendment Pennsylvania Republicans are seeking to place on the May ballot also would put a cap on the governor's disaster declarations — 21 days, unless lawmakers vote to extend them. The Legislature also could halt them at any time with a two-thirds vote.

Wolf has said that prematurely ending his disaster declaration would itself be "disastrous" for the state and that requiring repeated legislative approval "could slow down or halt emergency response when aid is most needed."

In Michigan, House Republicans have threatened to withhold billions of dollars for schools unless Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer cedes her administration's power to prohibit in-person instruction and

sports to local health departments. Whitmer called the move "cruel and reckless." Whitmer was the target of an alleged kidnapping plot last fall by anti-government extremists upset over her coronavirus restrictions.

Though legislative resistance to executive coronavirus orders has fallen largely along partisan lines in some states, lawmakers elsewhere are pushing back against governors of their own parties.

Republicans in the Arizona Senate want to end the broad emergency powers that GOP Gov. Doug Ducey has used to limit large gatherings and business capacities.

Ohio Sen. Rob McColley introduced a bill this week that could rescind emergency health orders issued by Gov. Mike DeWine, a fellow Republican. It would create a committee to retroactively review them. DeWine vetoed a similar bill last year.

McColley said the Legislature needs to take action "when the relatively unfettered power of the executive branch during a time

of emergency has lasted as long as it has."

In Indiana, Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb's executive orders have also stirred opposition from his own party. GOP-sponsored legislation would require lawmakers to be called into session to extend a governor's emergency order beyond 60 days.

South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster is supporting legislation that would give lawmakers greater opportunity to pass judgment on his emergency declarations.

Under current law, McMaster can issue a declaration for just 15 days before the General Assembly has to weigh in. The Republican governor has skirted that by issuing 22 different declarations, with incremental changes, every two weeks or so. McMaster has said his goal wasn't to avoid legislative oversight; he said he couldn't wait for lawmakers to meet when they were trying to stay apart during the pandemic.

Democrats who control the Maryland General Assembly are pressing for more transparency from Republican Gov. Larry Hogan's administration. One idea would require him to go through a state board or alert a legislative panel before making emergency coronavirus purchases.

Hogan spent millions of dollars last year on a confidential deal to acquire COVID-19 testing supplies from South Korea that didn't initially meet federal requirements.

A separate GOP-sponsored bill seeks to limit Hogan's power by capping the number of times he could extend a state of emergency without legislative input. Hogan has denounced it as "about probably the dumbest thing I've ever heard in my life."

Lawmakers are also seeking to rein in the emergency powers of local officials, especially in states such as Missouri, where the Republican governor has deferred most decisions on shut-downs and masks to cities and counties. □

## N.Y. undercounted nursing home deaths by thousands, AG says

By **MARINA VILLENEUVE, BERNARD CONDON and MATT SEDENSKY**

**Associated Press**

**ALBANY, N.Y. (AP)** — New York may have undercounted COVID-19 deaths among nursing home residents by thousands, the state attorney general charged in a report Thursday that dealt a blow to Gov. Andrew Cuomo's oft-repeated claims that his state is doing better than others in protecting its most vulnerable.

The 76-page report found an undercount of more than 50%, backing up the findings of an Associated Press investigation last year that focused on the fact that New York is one of the only states in the nation that count residents who died on nursing home property and not those who later died in hospitals.

Such an undercount would mean the state's current official tally of 8,711 nursing home deaths to the virus is actually more than 13,000, boosting New York from No. 6 to highest in the nation.

"While we cannot bring back the individuals we lost to this crisis, this report seeks to offer transparency that the public deserves," Attorney General Letitia James said in a statement.

The report from a fellow Democratic official undercut Cuomo's frequent argument that the criticism of his handling of the virus in nursing homes was part of a political "blame game," and it was a vindication for thousands of families who believed their loved ones were being omitted from



In this Aug. 6, 2020, file photo, New York State Attorney General Letitia James adjusts her glasses during a press conference in New York.

**Associated Press**

counts to advance the governor's image as a pandemic hero.

"It's important to me that my mom was counted," said Vivian Zayas, whose 78-year-old mother died in April after contracting COVID-19 at a nursing home in West Islip, New York. "Families like mine knew these numbers were not correct." Cuomo's office and the state health department have not responded to repeated requests for comment.

James has for months been examining discrepancies between the number of deaths being reported by the state's Department of Health, and the number of deaths reported by the homes themselves.

Her investigators looked at a sample of 62 of the state's roughly 600 nursing homes. They reported 1,914 deaths

of residents from COVID-19, while the state Department of Health logged only 1,229 deaths at those same facilities. One unnamed facility, for example, had an official death toll of 11 but the attorney general's probe found that 40 had actually died.

AP's analysis in August concluded that the state could be understating deaths by as much as 65%, based on discrepancies between its totals and numbers being reported to federal regulators. That analysis was, like James' report, based on only a slice of data, rather than a comprehensive look.

To date, despite public records requests from the AP and repeated pleas from state and federal lawmakers, New York's health department has yet to produce the full number of

nursing home residents who died in hospitals as well as the nursing home property. Health Commissioner Howard Zucker has said several times that the state is working on such data.

State Sen. Gustavo Rivera, a Democrat who has blasted the Cuomo administration for its incomplete death count, said he was "sadly unsurprised" by the report.

Cuomo, who last fall released a book touting his leadership in dealing with the virus, has not been shy about using New York's lower nursing home death count to make the argument that his state is doing better than others in caring for those in such facilities.

"There's also no doubt that we're in this hyper-political environment so everybody wants to point fingers," Cuomo told CBS "This Morn-

ing" in October. "New York, actually, we're number 46 out of 50 in terms of percentage of deaths in nursing homes — 46 out of 50. So, yes, people died in nursing homes. ... but 46 out of 50, it's not a predominantly New York problem."

The attorney general's report also took aim at New York's controversial March 25 policy that sought to create more space in hospitals by releasing recovering COVID-19 patients into nursing homes, which critics contended was a driving factor in causing nursing home outbreaks.

James' report said those admissions "may have contributed to increased risk of nursing home resident infection and subsequent fatalities," noting that at least 4,000 nursing home residents with COVID-19 died after that guidance. But James' report said the issue would require further study to conclusively prove such a link.

New York's health department released a much-criticized report last summer that claimed the March 25 policy, which was reversed in May, was "not a significant factor" in deaths.

James' review also found that a lack of infection controls at nursing homes put residents at increased risk of harm, that homes with lower federal scores for staffing had higher fatality rates, and that a broad measure Cuomo signed in April shielding nursing homes and other health care providers from lawsuits may have actually encouraged homes to hold back on hiring and training. □

## Polygamous sect's South Dakota compound in foreclosure

**PRINGLE, S.D. (AP)** — A compound in South Dakota's Black Hills held by a secretive polygamous sect is for sale after the group defaulted on a \$1.6 million loan, according to a local sheriff.

Court documents show the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints' property near Pringle in Custer County is in foreclosure, KELO-TV reported.

The 140-acre (57-hectare) property includes nine parcels of land. It will be sold as one during an auction Feb. 25 at the Custer County Courthouse, said Sheriff Marty Mechaley. The

compound sits along a gravel road and is shielded from view by tall pine trees, a privacy fence and a guard tower.

The FLDS is an offshoot of mainstream Mormonism whose members believe polygamy brings exaltation in heaven. Polygamy is a legacy of the early teachings of the mainstream Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but the faith abandoned the practice in 1890 and prohibits it today.

Seth Jeffs, who authorities have said led the FLDS compound in South Dakota, is the brother of Warren Jeffs, who is considered by the

group to be a prophet who speaks for God. Warren Jeffs is serving a life sentence in Texas for sexually assaulting underage girls he considered to be his brides.

In recent years, the group has lost hundreds of members and control of the sister cities of Hildale, Utah, and Colorado City, Arizona, amid a major leadership void started by Warren Jeffs' imprisonment.

Seth Jeffs took a plea deal in a multimillion-dollar food-stamp fraud case in 2016. His brother Lyle Jeffs was sentenced in 2017 to prison for his role in carrying out the scheme. □

# Philadelphia police commissioner defends protest response

By **CLAUDIA LAUER**

**Associated Press**

**PHILADELPHIA (AP)** — Philadelphia's police commissioner is defending her department and the city's response to days of widespread protests against police brutality last summer in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May.

Commissioner Danielle Outlaw held a news conference Thursday to answer harsh criticism of her direct decision-making issued in a report on the protest response. Conducted by two independent firms and released by the city controller's office Wednesday, the report has prompted the editorial board of the city's largest newspaper to call for Outlaw's resignation.

Critics and protesters have denounced the city's use of tear gas and other less-than-lethal munitions during at least three incidents. In one instance, officers fired gas canisters and pepper spray pellets at protesters who had made their way onto Interstate 676, became trapped by SWAT and other police ve-



In this May 30, 2020, file photo, Philadelphia police restrain a man during the Justice for George Floyd Philadelphia Protest.

hicles and tried clamoring up a steep hill and over a fence to escape.

"There was simply not a blueprint for what our city faced this summer," Outlaw said of the days of unrest over racial injustice that in some areas devolved into violence, destruction of city and police property and thefts.

"Did I lead this department

in the last year? Absolutely, and some. No police commissioner (or) superintendent has ever had to deal with what we dealt with in the past year," she added. Unlike a previous independent report commissioned by Mayor Jim Kenney's office that said the city was largely unprepared for the unrest, the report commissioned by Controller Re-

becca Rhyhart's office placed blame directly on Outlaw and Kenney.

The report said Kenney ceded decision-making on whether to use tear gas or less-lethal munitions to Outlaw, noting that before she had come to Philadelphia last February, she had been criticized for using tear gas to control protests in Portland where she was previ-

**Associated Press**

ously the police chief. Kenney was not at the news conference Thursday but afterward tweeted his continued support for Outlaw. The report also released new alleged details of Outlaw's specific response gleaned from interviews, reviews of police communication and radio traffic. The authors said Outlaw had requested to use tear gas in at least one other incident during the protests and that she was present on an overpass, but not in command, when protesters made their way onto the highway before less-than-lethal munition and gas were deployed.

Outlaw on Thursday countered both allegations. She said she could not remember whether she asked to deploy tear gas on the first night of the protests, but she does not believe she would have thought it was warranted for property damage.

She also said she was not present when tear gas was being fired at the protesters on the highway, but arrived at the overpass after it had already been used. □

## Liquid nitrogen leak at Georgia poultry plant kills 6



Emergency personnel gather outside of the Foundation Food Group site Thursday, Jan 28, 2021, in Gainesville, Ga., following a liquid nitrogen leak that killed six people.

**Associated Press**

By **JEFF AMY**

**GAINESVILLE, Ga. (AP)** — A liquid nitrogen leak at a northeast Georgia poultry plant killed six people Thursday, with multiple others taken to the hospital, officials said.

At least three of those injured at the Foundation Food Group plant in Gainesville were reported

in critical condition.

Poultry plants rely on refrigeration systems that can include liquid nitrogen. Firefighters, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the state fire marshal were investigating the cause of the leak.

"It was a leak of unknown cause that has occurred

in the system here," Hall County Fire Department Division Chief Zach Brackett said. "We still have a lot of information we're trying to gather from the scene."

Foundation Food Group Vice President for Human Resources Nicholas Anrum called the leak a tragic accident and said early indications are that a nitrogen line ruptured in the facility.

When leaked into the air, liquid nitrogen vaporizes into an odorless gas that's capable of displacing oxygen. That means leaks in enclosed spaces can become deadly by pushing away breathable air, according to the U.S. Chemical Safety Board.

Workers who had fled the plant were gathered outside when firefighters responded to the leak Thursday morning, Brackett said. "Once the units arrived,

they found a large contingent of employees that had evacuated, along with multiple victims that were in that crowd that were also experiencing medical emergencies around the facility," Brackett told reporters in a televised news briefing.

Beth Downs, a spokesperson for Northeast Georgia Health System, said five people died at the plant and one person died in the emergency room.

Eleven other injured patients were treated for respiratory symptoms at the hospital, including three in critical condition, health system spokesman Sean Couch said. He said five were in fair condition and three were treated and released.

At least four firefighters were injured and taken to the hospital with what Brackett described as re-

spiratory complaints. Hall County school officials said students were kept safe inside a nearby elementary school during the emergency but the leak was contained and not airborne. The shelter in place order was lifted Thursday afternoon. About 1.5 miles (2.5 kilometers) of a road that runs in front of the plant and school was closed.

Gainesville is the center of Georgia's poultry industry — the nation's largest — and has thousands of employees working in multiple processing plants.

The plant was known and Prime Pak Foods until January, when it merged into Foundation Food Group, a company that takes raw chicken and processes it into products like chicken fingers and individual chicken cuts for restaurants and food service operations. □

## Watchdog: Least corrupt nations produce best virus response

By DAVID RISING  
Associated Press

**BERLIN (AP)** — Countries with the least corruption have been best positioned to weather the health and economic challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, according to a closely-watched annual study released Thursday by an anti-graft organization.

Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index, which measures the perception of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople, concluded that countries that performed well invested more in health care, were "better able to provide universal health coverage and are less likely to violate democratic norms."

"COVID-19 is not just a health and economic crisis," said Transparency head Delia Ferreira Rubio. "It is a corruption crisis - and one that we are currently failing to manage."

This year's index showed the United States hitting a new low amid a steady de-



In this Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2020 file photo Rohingya refugees board a naval ship to be transported to an isolated island in the Bay of Bengal, in Chittagong, Bangladesh.

Associated Press

cline under the presidency of Donald Trump, with a score of 67 on a scale where 0 is "highly corrupt" and 100 is "very clean."

That still put the U.S. 25th on the list in a tie with Chile, but behind many other western democracies. It dropped from scores of 69

in 2019, 71 in 2018 and 75 in 2017, and was down to the lowest level since figures for comparison have been available.

"In addition to alleged conflicts of interest and abuse of office at the highest level, in 2020 weak oversight of the \$1 trillion COVID-19

relief package raised serious concerns and marked a retreat from longstanding democratic norms promoting accountable government," said the report by Transparency, which is based in Berlin.

The link between corruption and coronavirus re-

sponse could be widely seen around the world, according to the report's analysis.

For example, Uruguay scored 71 — putting it at 21st place on the list. It invests heavily in health care and has a strong epidemiological surveillance system, which has helped not only with COVID-19 but also other diseases like yellow fever and Zika, Transparency said.

By contrast, Bangladesh, which scored 26 and placed 146th on the list, "invests little in health care while corruption flourishes during COVID-19, ranging from bribery in health clinics to misappropriated aid," Transparency wrote. "Corruption is also pervasive in the procurement of medical supplies."

"While the government communicates openly about the measures and policies it puts in place, more transparency is needed around public procurement for COVID-19 recovery," the organization wrote. □

## U.S. 'directly' presses Eritrea to withdraw forces from Tigray

By CARA ANNA  
Associated Press

**NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)** — The United States says it has directly "pressed senior levels" of Eritrea's government to immediately withdraw its troops from neighboring Ethiopia, where witnesses have described them looting and hunting down civilians in the embattled Tigray region.

A State Department spokesperson in an email to The Associated Press on Thursday said Washington has conveyed "grave" concerns about credible reports of abuses. There were no details on how officials with Eritrea, one of the world's most secretive countries, responded.

Eritrea has said little publicly about the conflict in Tigray as Ethiopian soldiers fight forces loyal to the now-fugitive Tigray regional leaders who once

dominated Ethiopia's government for nearly three decades. The Tigray leaders were marginalized after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took office in 2018, and each side regards the other as illegitimate.

Ethiopia has repeatedly denied the presence of Eritrean soldiers, who some witnesses have estimated in the thousands. Now concerns are growing that the Eritrean forces refuse to leave. Eritrea remains an enemy of the fugitive Tigray leaders after a two-decade border war that ended under Abiy.

Eritrea's information ministry on Thursday published a statement by the country's embassy in the U.S. responding to an open letter this week by former U.S. ambassadors to Ethiopia that expressed concern about the Tigray conflict and Eritrea's involvement. "The allu-

sion by these ambassadors to potential territorial war between Eritrea and Ethiopia can only be disingenuous in content and vicious in intent," Eritrea's statement said, expressing "profound dismay at their provocative and ill-intentioned swipe." The Tigray region remains largely cut off from the outside world and Ethiopia has blocked almost all journalists from entering, complicating efforts to verify assertions by the warring sides.

Meanwhile, humanitarian workers have had limited access to the estimated 6 million people in Tigray as food and other supplies run short and concerns about starvation grow.

The situation is "deteriorating every day, every minute," the president of the Ethiopian Red Cross Society, Ato Abera Tola, told reporters on Thursday as Red Cross entities ap-



In this Nov. 21, 2020, file photo, refugees who fled the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region arrive on the banks of the Tekeze River on the Sudan-Ethiopia border, in Hamdayet, eastern Sudan.

Associated Press

pealed for more financial support. "There is no area which is not affected by this conflict ... the conflict is everywhere."

The Ethiopia head of delegation for the International Committee for the Red Cross, Katia Sorin, said they still had not been able

to reach rural areas of Tigray, a largely agricultural region. The ICRC is one of the few international organizations to maintain its operations in Tigray after fighting began.

"We're helping, but it's a drop in the ocean of need," Sorin said. □

# Poland: Near-total abortion ban takes effect amid protests

By VANESSA GERA

Associated Press

**WARSAW, Poland (AP)** — A near-total ban on abortion has taken effect in Poland and triggered a new round of nationwide protests three months after a top court ruled that the abortion of congenitally damaged fetuses is unconstitutional.

Led by a women's rights group, Women's Strike, people poured onto the streets of Warsaw and other cities and towns on Thursday for the second evening in a row.

"I wanted to have more children, you killed this desire," read a banner held by one woman among the demonstrators in Warsaw. Some Polish women said that if they are denied the right to terminate pregnancies in cases of badly deformed fetuses, they would not try to have children at all. Poland's top human rights official denounced the further restriction of what was already one of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe, calling it a tragedy for women.

"The state wants to further limit their rights, risk their lives, and condemn them to torture," said Adam Bodnar, the human rights commissioner, or ombudsman, whose role is independent from the Polish govern-



People protest against new anti-abortion laws, near the ruling Law and Justice party headquarters in Warsaw, Poland Wednesday Jan. 27, 2021, to protest after the country's top court on Wednesday confirmed its highly divisive ruling that will further tighten the predominantly Catholic nation's strict anti-abortion law.

ment. "This offensive is opposed by civil society."

The only remaining legal justifications for abortion under Polish law are if the woman's life or health is at risk or if a pregnancy results from rape or incest. To date, about 98% of all legal abortions in the country — of which there were 1,110 in 2019 — were performed on the grounds of fetal malformations.

The restriction of abortion

comes amid a broader erosion of civil liberties under right-wing populist authorities in Poland, as well as Hungary. The erosion of democratic rights in the two nations also is spreading to other parts of ex-communist central Europe, presenting a challenge for the European Union and U.S. President Joe Biden as he seeks to restore democratic norms at home and abroad. Poland's constitu-

tional court on Wednesday issued a justification of a controversial October ruling that bans abortions in cases of fetuses with congenital defects, even ones so severe that there is no chance of survival upon birth. The government then published the court's ruling in a government Journal of Laws. Those steps were the formal prerequisites required for the new law to enter into force.

Associated Press

Members of Poland's ruling Law and Justice party, which is aligned with the Roman Catholic Church, had sought the new restriction. They argued that it was a way to prevent the abortion of fetuses with Down syndrome, which have made up a significant share of the legal abortions in Poland.

Women's rights activists consider the new law to be draconian.

The protesters are demanding a full liberalization of the abortion law and the resignation of the government, neither of which seem likely in the short term.

In the meantime, women's rights groups are seeking new strategies to help women. The Federation for Women and Family planning says it will seek redress in international courts, arguing that the new law violates prohibitions of cruel treatment and torture.

It is also assisting women who want to obtain abortion pills or travel abroad for the procedure.

Some protesters Wednesday covered their faces with green handkerchiefs, which are the symbol of the abortion rights movement in Argentina. The South American country recently legalized abortion, a historic change in deeply Catholic Latin America. □

## Iraq kills IS commander, a week after Baghdad suicide blasts

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA

Associated Press

**BAGHDAD (AP)** — Iraqi security forces have killed

a senior commander of the Islamic State group, the prime minister said on Thursday, a week after the

rare, twin suicide bombing by IS militants killed dozens in Baghdad.

The Islamic State group had quickly claimed responsibility for the Jan. 21 blasts at a busy open-air market in the Iraqi capital. At least 32 people were killed and more than 100 were wounded.

Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi tweeted on Thursday that an "intelligence-led" operation in northern Iraq killed 39-year-old Abu Yasar al-Issawi, deputy commander and IS chief in Iraq.

The country's security forces have faced mounting pressure after the Jan. 21 attack in central Bagh-

dad, with many saying the attack — the first to strike the Iraqi capital by the militant group in three years — was a failure of Iraq's intelligence.

"I gave my word to pursue the Daesh terrorists, we gave them a thundering response," al-Kadhimi said, referring to IS by its Arabic acronym.

Al-Issawi, born Jabbar al-Issawi, was killed in an operation west of the city of Kirkuk where IS militants are known to still have a presence.

The operation was lead by Iraq's elite Counter-Terrorism Service, in cooperation with Iraqi intelligence. Iraqi forces clashed with IS

militants and al-Issawi was killed in the firefight, the counter-terrorism agency said on its Facebook page.

The Baghdad attack also came as the U.S.-led coalition forges ahead with plans to withdraw troops from the country. U.S. troops have gradually withdrawn from bases across Iraq to consolidate in Baghdad and the Ain al-Asad airbase in Anbar. However, Iraq remains heavily reliant on U.S. weaponry and surveillance technology and expertise to root out IS presence across the country's north and the vast western desert. □



In this Thursday, Jan. 21, 2021, file photo, people and security forces gather at the site of a deadly bomb attack in a market selling used clothes, in Baghdad, Iraq.

Associated Press

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## Strikes, violence overwhelm Haiti's crumbling judiciary

By EVENS SANON and DÁNICA COTO

Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)

— A warning from a well-known judge in Haiti crackled recently over the radio: "Don't let them arrest you, because you don't know when you will be released from prison."

Haiti's justice system has long been dysfunctional. But in recent years delayed judicial appointments, a spike in violence and protests by judges and court clerks demanding higher salaries and better working conditions have overwhelmed a system in which some 80% of inmates are being held with no trial amid a rise in what activists say are illegal and arbitrary preventive detentions.

"These conditions are so unacceptable that they constitute a violation of the prohibition of cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment," the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti said in a statement this



Lina André looks out from the entrance of the National Penitentiary where she waits to deliver food for her boyfriend who is incarcerated there, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Monday, Jan. 25, 2021.

Associated Press

week. Overall, some 11,000 inmates are being held in prisons across Haiti, including the National Penitentiary in the capital of Port-au-Prince, which was built for 800 prisoners but holds an estimated 3,800.

"The system is on its knees," said Marie-Yolène Gilles, executive director of the human rights group Fondasyon Je Klere. "It has been crippled for a year now."

Those concerns were

echoed by Judge Jean Wilner Morin last month during a radio news program in which he warned that people should avoid being arrested as he talked about Haiti's problems, including the troubles in the justice

system. On a recent afternoon, more than a dozen people stood outside the National Penitentiary, colorful plastic bags lying at their feet holding food for their loved ones inside.

Lina André had traveled for more than an hour to see her boyfriend, who has been incarcerated for 10 years but hasn't seen a judge since he was arrested on suspicion of killing a man. Haiti is among the top 10 countries in the world most affected by prolonged pretrial detention, with people often imprisoned for more than a decade as they await a judicial hearing, according to the U.N.

Activists expect the situation to worsen, given the increase in violence and protests and a decree that President Jovenel Moïse recently approved that classifies certain crimes as terrorism, including robbery, arson and blocking public roads, common events during protests. □

## Brazil to end military-led program against Amazon logging

By DIANE JEANTET

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)

— Brazil's ongoing military-led operation to curb illegal deforestation and fires in the Amazon rainforest will end April 30, Vice President Hamilton Mourão said at the World Economic Forum on Wednesday. Mourão defended the success of Operation Green Brazil 2, which was launched last May and saw deployment of thousands of soldiers across the Amazon. The vice president leads the government's Amazon Council to fight deforestation in the region.

Since Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro took office, domestic and international concern has grown over the president's calls for economic development in the Amazon.

His critics have said the military operation has failed to clamp down on rampant illegal logging. Government data showed that just over 11,000 square kilometers of forest disappeared between July 2019 and August 2020, up 9.5% compared to the previous year and the most since 2008.

Conclusion of the program means environmental agencies will once again

be responsible for monitoring the country's vast rainforest, Mourão said.

"We have been working on a plan ... for our environmental agencies to resume, at the best of their capacity, operations and incursions into the forest," he said.

An AP investigation last year found that the number of fines issued for environmental crimes had decreased significantly in recent years, and especially under Bolsonaro.

Mourão on Wednesday also called for "vital" private and international investments in the region.

"Sustainable develop-

ment, particularly in the case of the Amazon, will only succeed with greater

engagement from the private sector," he said. □



A fire rages through the Amazon rainforest in Altamira, Brazil, on Tuesday, Aug. 27, 2019.

Associated Press

# LOCAL



## My Aruba story, memories of a loyal reader

name is Ryan, we have become so close and his kids became friends with my daughter this past visit. They stayed friends through Tik-Tok. It was my daughter's first visit and she absolutely thought it was beautiful and made friends.

Aruba, but you cover all over the world and I think it's truly amazing we can get information from this paper even here at home. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to write my story. I could go on and on. Thank you and thanks to Aruba for always welcoming us on your One Happy Island. See you very soon."

Before this last trip I started to follow these dogs I seen posted one day on the internet. I became very curious about them and had no idea what breed they were. I always liked their pictures so I ended following them and meeting their owner on Facebook. His name is Jeremy, he has a brother Aldwin and we became friends. They own these beautiful exotic bullies and this past visit he was so kind enough to let me meet, those where the dogs your paper posted Monday. Both men are very kind and will answer anything about the bullies I have asked. I also would say Aldwin is always in the gym mode and will answer any questions I have about fitness. So again I made a couple of new friends this past trip.

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Complete the sentence: Aruba to me ..... Send your picture with text (including your name and where you are from) to: [news@arubato-day.com](mailto:news@arubato-day.com) and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. ☐

**ORANJESTAD —** "My name Alison Braswell, six years ago my husband Tom surprised me with a trip to Aruba and ever since then we go every year sometimes more than once a year. I have fell in love with the island as do so many others but for me it's for so many reasons. The beauty of it, the culture, most importantly the locals, other tourists and so many fun things to do. I have met so many people and became friends with them, stayed in contact with them over the years and always visit with them when I come.

I stay at the Tamarijn Hotel and the staff there is so amazing I can't say enough about them. Francis is one of the managers there, well I think he is, lol. He is super nice and waiting staff, bartenders, all the workers there are absolutely amazing, especially Julio. I have stayed at this hotel for all my visits except for one because it was closed. I have become friends with and stay in contact with them through Facebook. They all put a smile on my face and we have had some good laughs together. Six years long I took the De Palm tours and my bus driver was wonderful, we all talked and he became my first friend I met there. His

Aruba is a beautiful island but it's not just about the beauty it's also about the people. I have learned so much through the people. The Aruba Today newspaper I have been following for the last couple of years. I love waking up and reading the articles and see what is going on. You don't only cover

## The Hilton Aruba, giving back to the community

**PALM BEACH –** The Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino takes great pleasure in reporting that it recently made a donation to FPNC, Fundacion Pa Nos Comunidad, and the island's food bank.

The donation presentation was attended by the resort's Executive Team and FPNC's management team. The donation made to the organization was collected from guests, hotel partners, clients, and employees during the recent holiday season.

In the spirit of the season, the resort chose to forgo the traditional holiday décor in favor of creating a "Tree of Giving," made with poinsettia plants purchased by guests and employees. This Tree of Giving allowed locals and guests alike to unite for a greater cause and contribute directly to Aruba's food bank, and FPNC.



Continued on Page 9



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## ATSA elects a new board of directors for 2021

**EAGLE BEACH** — The Aruba Time Share Association, ATSA, is proud to introduce two newly elected board members Bob Curtis of Casa Del Mar and Jessica Franken of La Cabana Beach Resort & Casino.

The announcement was made by chairman of the ATSA board, Luigi Heredia, of Costa Linda Beach Resort.

The ATSA resorts, says Heredia, were among the least affected by the pandemic, and they continue to register average occupancies above the 50% mark, and their members are returning to visit the island despite restrictions.

Vacation Ownership, formerly known as the timesharing industry is in its fifth decade here and plays a major economic role with about forty (40) percent of Aruba's total hotel accommodation inventory consisting of timesharing units. Thanks to loyal owners, the sustained year-round high occupancies of the sixteen (16) timeshare Resorts on the island is often the envy of all other competitors.

The industry concludes Heredia, is now focused on maintaining its employees, helping them through the crisis, complying with government payments, designed to support the public sector and safeguard community projects. Similar to all other businesses, the industry would also like to see flexibility introduced into labor laws and a better, more efficient reset, of the public sector on the island.

The two newly elected board members will be replacing Ursell Arends, La Quinta, and Freddy Albertus, Paradise Beach Villas, who are stepping down as board members, while remaining association members. They both reported they will be participating in some new private and professional ventures in 2021.

Ursell Arends, the former president of the association served as a board member in 2020. In his role, he was responsible for the voice of the association to be continuously heard, making sure the association remains a relevant, vibrant force in hospitality. Under his leadership, the University of Aruba is currently completing a project conveying the message that the vacation ownership industry offers solid opportunities in hospitality, here. The project will appear in the form of an education book, in the very near future. Arends will be devoting his time to upgrading and improving the La Quinta vacation product and participating in a local political party, RAIZ.

Bob Curtis, General Manager, Casa Del Mar, joined ATSA in 2014, when he became the general manager of his resort. He will be serving on a number of ATSA committees, such as Hurricane and Calamity preparedness, and devote his time to upgrades and improvements at Casa del Mar, which is doing very well under the circumstances, with members coming on vacation regularly, and even buying additional weeks, he reports.



Jessica Franken, Assistant General Manager, La Cabana Beach Resort & Casino, got involved with ATSA, since its inception. She is returning in 2021 at the secretary of the board. "We focus on staying in close contact with our guests," she says, "to help the resort and ATSA generate revenues required to keep the island's economy afloat. Our loyal owners, are an important part of the island's recovery. They frequently say they feel safer here, than at home."

The ATSA 2021 board consist of Chairperson Luigi Heredia, treasurer Jurgen V Schaijk, Secretary Jessica Franken, members Bob Curtis and Sulaika Kelly, Playa Linda Beach Resort. Among ATSA's Community Projects in these difficult time is the support of the Red Cross Aruba, with a five-year commitment. Also most importantly, ATSA collaborates with CEDE ARUBA on an Individual Giving Based Fundraising. ATSA and CEDE ensure the funds go where they are really needed. □

## The Hilton Aruba, giving back to the community

Continued from Page 8

As the check was handed over this week, Gianaika v/d Biezen thanked the resort wholeheartedly. "January has been tough on many families in Aruba," she reported, "as a number of additional local businesses closed and funds received from the Dutch kingdom are dwindling. The donation by the Hilton, will come in handy, and allow FPNC to continue to support 4,200 registered families with food donations and care packages,"

she stated. She also praised the resort for the many volunteer hours freely given to her organization as 10 to 12 Hilton employees have been showing up daily at the food bank to help prepare packages distributed to the needy.

"The resort has been the backbone of our food bank operation," she said. Resort Team Members have been volunteering at the food bank, managed by FPNC, at Club Kibrahacha, since September, 2020. Since founding in 2009, FPNC's mission is to fight and end

poverty, emotional distress and social exclusion on the island.

Prior to the pandemic, the food bank supported approximately 200 Aruban families per month with food baskets. This number has risen exponentially with the economic and financial downturn, following the pandemic.

FPNC's colossal food drive, wouldn't have been possible without the financial support of generous individuals and organizations. At the informal ceremony the resort handed over

100% of the funds collected, and committed to continuously provide FPNC with the necessary manpower.

The effort was coordinated by members of Hilton's Blue Energy committee, a global cultural initiative led by Hilton. "FPNC," explains v/d Biezen, "has no paid employees and relies 100% on the good will of the community."

Pictured here, Blue Energy members, management and FPNC representatives at the check presentation. To donate:

Donate your time, at Club

Kibrahacha, strong arms needed to move boxes and a sweet smile to greet clients.

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# Harbour House Aruba: “Over 80 % sold already, we are doing great”



**ORANJESTAD** — Boosting a buyers confidence comes with a strong sales team, an established company name and experience. The Perret Group are the owners of among others Harbour House Aruba and they live up to the expectation. With 80 % of the condominiums sold in their residence they can do nothing more but be content. Take a look at this cool site reflecting best of two worlds: beach and city.

The residence consists of 111 units in the former 7-level Marazul building at the historical location of Paardenbaai. Harbour House Aruba is the ultimate smart investment or personal living space. A state-of-the-art lobby, an ocean-view gym, bar service, rooftop with 360 degrees view of Oranjestad, on-site parking, 24-hours security and a top floor lounge area with Jacuzzi's. Cherry on the cake: an infinity pool.

Harbour House Aruba offers cosmopolitan living in a beach-chic environment. The residence is fast-selling their studios, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units for many reasons but in a

nutshell we can name: great location, great value for your money and great quality. To see exactly what still is available you may check the website which shows you a map with sold and open units. Updates on construction are also on forehand. When you live abroad stopping by to check upon your purchase is not that simple, yet with the monthly updates on their website, it is a lot easier.

The process of purchase is easy, whether you are abroad or on the island. Make an appointment through the website to visit the sales office when you are here. In that way you can actually see the unit, materials and amenities. If you are not on the island the website can help you out and the sales office is happy to send you all needed documentation for you to orientate. “When agreed upon the unit you sign an agreement and move forward with the down payment. At receipt of that amount the sales is closed and the price will not change. You know what you get and will not be surprised by price changes. The payment agreements after the deposit will be discussed and are flexible. We assist also in financing by banks,” the sales representative explains.

The ground level of the building will provide a gallery of restaurants, art gallery, stores, and supermarket. “We get in more requests for renting and so far we have restaurant, salon, mini market, art gallery a craft beer factory which makes up for a great variation. A parking lot will be assigned to the owners and visitors.”

City elegance combined with tropical tranquility is what you get here. The panoramas are breath-taking. Can you imagine yourself with your favorite cup of joe, gazing out over the ocean while the city of Oranjestad is awakening? The new trend is to live tinier but comfy and Harbour House meets this market demand with the perfect product. Everything is close, you are centrally located, just a step away from the beach though right in the main area in Oranjestad. You have history to tell and you are within walking distance to all Oranjestad has to offer. What else do you need? ☐

For more information: <https://harbourhousearuba.com>



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# Brokerages limit trading in GameStop, sparking outcry

By **ALEX VEIGA**  
AP Business Writer

Robinhood and other retail brokerages are taking steps to tamp down the speculative frenzy surrounding companies such as GameStop, but the actions only sparked more volatility and an outcry from users of the platforms and some members of Congress that small investors are being treated unfairly.

GameStop stock has rocketed from below \$20 earlier to close around \$350 Wednesday as a volunteer army of investors on social media challenged big institutions who had placed market bets that the stock would fall.

The action was even wilder Thursday: The stock swung between \$112 and \$483. At midday it was down 27% at \$255.

Robinhood said Thursday investors would only be able to sell their positions and not open new ones in some cases, and Robinhood will try to slow the amount of trading using borrowed money.

Besides GameStop, Robinhood said trading in stocks such as AMC Entertainment, Bed Bath & Beyond,



This Dec. 17, 2020 file photo shows the logo for the Robinhood app on a smartphone in New York. Associated Press

BlackBerry, Nokia, Express Inc., Koss Corp., American Airlines, Tootsie Roll, Trivago and Naked Brand Group would be affected by the new restrictions.

Interactive Brokers also placed option trading of AMC, BlackBerry, Express, GameStop and Koss "into liquidation," citing extraordinary volatility in the markets. It also tightened margin requirements indefinitely on "short stock positions." Charles Schwab and TD

Ameritrade took similar steps to restrict trading on their platforms Wednesday. Robinhood's stated goal is to "democratize" investing and to bring more regular people into investing. The company has forced huge, ground-shaking changes for the brokerage industry, such as its decision to charge zero commissions for customers trading stocks and exchange-traded funds. That's why some users took Thursday's actions

as an affront. Robinhood investor Carlos Amaya said the app's action Thursday was a disappointment to users like him who prided themselves on being a "different breed of investors." The 28-year-old school operations manager in Washington, D.C., said his parents immigrated from El Salvador and he was the first person in his family to buy stocks when he started using the app in 2017. He's since made several thou-

sand dollars.

"We pride ourselves in the name Robinhood because we're trying to make more money and be the next people at the top," he said. "You would expect Robinhood to let us do our thing instead of blocking us and saying it's for our protection."

Investors such as Amaya are getting some sympathy from some members of Congress.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., called Robinhood's actions "unacceptable," noting that as a member of the House Financial Services Committee, she'd support a hearing, if necessary, to explore why the online brokerage is blocking small investors from buying stocks while hedge funds "are freely able to trade the stock as they see fit."

Democratic Rep. Ro Khanna, whose California district sits in Big Tech's Silicon Valley, said the GameStop episode "has demonstrated the power of technology to democratize access to American financial institutions, ultimately giving far more people a say in our economic structures." □

## Attacks on individuals fall as cybercrime shifts tactics

By **SARAH SKIDMORE SELL**  
AP Personal Finance Writer  
Cybercriminals

shifted away from stealing individual consumers' information in 2020 to focus on bigger, more profitable attacks on businesses, according to a report from the Identity Theft Resource Center.

The nonprofit, which supports victims of identity crime, found that the number of U.S. data breaches fell 19% in 2020 to 1,108. But the number of individual victims of such cybercrimes fell 66% compared with the year prior.

Ransomware and phishing attacks are now the preferred form of data theft because they require less effort and generate bigger payouts. The ITRC said that one ransomware attack can generate as much

revenue in minutes as hundreds of individual identity theft attempts over months or years.

According to cybersecurity firm Coveware, the average ransomware payout

has grown from less than \$10,000 per event in 2018 to more than \$233,000 per event in 2020.

However, experts urge consumers not to let down their guard.

According to the ITRC report released Thursday, even with the decline, there were still 300.5 million individuals impacted by data breaches in 2020. Although this figure may include repeats, where a person is victimized multiple times.

"People should understand that this problem is not going away," said Eva Velasquez, ITRC's president and CEO. "Cybercriminals are simply shifting their tactics to find a new way to attack businesses and consumers."

One rising trend is attacks on third parties, such as a vendor, that would yield access to multiple organizations through a single attack. Often, the organization is smaller, with weaker security measures than the

companies they work for. Additionally, the pandemic may have fueled some changes, with employees working remotely and potentially exposing their company networks to criminals. There was also an increase in unemployment fraud as cybercriminals tapped into those systems, which were overwhelmed with claims and new protocols.

Velasquez urged consumers to remain vigilant in protecting their personal and professional information. Criminals will continue to use personal information even if the means by which they obtain it has changed.

"We are not out of the woods," she said. "It's not time for consumers to breathe a sigh of relief." □



This June 19, 2017 file photo shows a person working on a laptop in North Andover, Mass. Associated Press

# EXPLAINER: Why it's hard to make vaccines and boost supplies

By **LAURAN NEERGAARD**  
AP Medical Writer

With demand for COVID-19 vaccines outpacing the world's supplies, a frustrated public and policymakers want to know: How can we get more? A lot more. Right away.

The problem: "It's not like adding more water to the soup," said vaccine specialist Maria Elena Bottazzi of Baylor College of Medicine.

Makers of COVID-19 vaccines need everything to go right as they scale up production to hundreds of millions of doses — and any little hiccup could cause a delay. Some of their ingredients have never before been produced at the sheer volume needed.

And seemingly simple suggestions that other factories switch to brewing new kinds of vaccines can't happen overnight. Just this week, French drugmaker Sanofi took the unusual step of announcing it would help bottle and package some vaccine produced by competitor Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech. But those doses won't start arriving until summer — and Sanofi has the space in a factory in Germany only because its own vaccine is delayed, bad news for the world's overall supply.

"We think, 'Well, OK, it's like men's shirts, right? I'll just have another place to make it,'" said Dr. Paul Offit of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, a vaccine adviser to the U.S. government. "It's just not that easy."

## DIFFERENT VACCINES, DIFFERENT RECIPES

The multiple types of COVID-19 vaccines being used in different countries all train the body to recognize the new coronavirus, mostly the spike protein that coats it. But they require different technologies, raw materials, equipment and expertise to do so.

The two vaccines authorized in the U.S. so far, from Pfizer and Moderna, are made by putting a piece of genetic code called mRNA — the instructions for that spike protein — inside



In this Friday, Jan. 22, 2021 file photo, empty vials of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine are seen at a vaccination center at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

a little ball of fat.

Making small amounts of mRNA in a research lab is easy but "prior to this, nobody made a billion doses or 100 million or even a million doses of mRNA," said Dr. Drew Weissman of the University of Pennsylvania, who helped pioneer mRNA technology.

Scaling up doesn't just mean multiplying ingredients to fit a bigger vat. Creating mRNA involves a chemical reaction between genetic building blocks and enzymes, and Weissman said the enzymes don't work as efficiently in larger volumes.

AstraZeneca's vaccine, already used in Britain and several other countries, and one expected soon from Johnson & Johnson, are made with a cold virus that sneaks the spike protein gene into the body. It's a very different form of manufacturing: living cells in giant bioreactors grow that cold virus, which is extracted and purified.

"If the cells get old or tired or start changing, you might get less," Weissman said. "There's a lot more variability and a lot more things you have to check." An old-fashioned variety — "inactivated" vaccines like one made by China's Sinovac — require even more steps and stiffer biosecurity because they're made

with killed coronavirus.

One thing all vaccines have in common: They must be made under strict rules that require specially inspected facilities and frequent testing of each step, a time-consuming necessity to be confident in the quality of each batch.

## WHAT ABOUT THE SUPPLY CHAIN?

Production depends on enough raw materials. Pfizer and Moderna insist they have reliable suppliers.

Even so, a U.S. government spokesman said logistics experts are working directly with vaccine makers to anticipate and solve any bottlenecks that arise.

Moderna CEO Stephane Bancel acknowledges that challenges remain.

With shifts running 24/7, if on any given day "there's one raw material missing, we cannot start making products and that capacity will be lost forever because we cannot make it up," he recently told investors.

Pfizer has temporarily slowed deliveries in Europe for several weeks, so it could upgrade its factory in Belgium to handle more production.

And sometimes the batches fall short. AstraZeneca told an outraged European Union that it, too, will deliver fewer doses than originally promised right away. The reason cited: Lower

than expected "yields," or output, at some European manufacturing sites.

More than in other industries, when brewing with biological ingredients, "there are things that can go wrong and will go wrong," said Norman Baylor, a former Food and Drug Administration vaccine chief who called yield variability common.

## HOW MUCH IS ON THE WAY?

That varies by country. Moderna and Pfizer each are on track to deliver 100 million doses to the U.S. by the end of March and another 100 million in the second quarter of the year. Looking even further ahead, President Joe Biden has announced plans to buy still more over the summer, reaching enough to eventually vaccinate 300 million Americans.

Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla told a Bloomberg conference this week that his company will actually wind up providing 120 million doses by the end of March — not by speedier production but because health workers now are allowed to squeeze an extra dose out of every vial.

But getting six doses instead of five requires using specialized syringes, and there are questions about the global supply. A Health and Human Services spokesman said the U.S.

is sending kits that include the special syringes with each Pfizer shipment.

Pfizer also said its factory upgrade in Belgium is short-term pain for longer-term gain, as the changes will help increase worldwide production to 2 billion doses this year instead of the originally anticipated 1.3 billion. Moderna likewise recently announced it will be able to supply 600 million doses of vaccine in 2021, up from 500 million, and that it was expanding capacity in hopes of getting to 1 billion. But possibly the easiest way to get more doses is if other vaccines in the pipeline are proven to work. U.S. data on whether Johnson & Johnson's one-dose shot protects is expected soon, and another company, Novavax, also is in final-stage testing.

## OTHER OPTIONS

For months, the chief vaccine companies lined up "contract manufacturers" in the U.S. and Europe to help them crank out doses and then undergo the final bottling steps. Moderna, for example, is working with Switzerland's Lonza.

Beyond rich nations, the Serum Institute of India has a contract to manufacture a billion doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine. It's the world's largest vaccine maker and is expected to be a key supplier for developing countries.

But some homegrown efforts to boost supplies appear hobbled. Two Brazilian research institutes plan to make millions of doses of the AstraZeneca and Sinovac vaccines but have been set back by unexplained delays in shipments of key ingredients from China. And Bottazzi said the world simultaneously has to keep up production of vaccines against polio, measles, meningitis and other diseases that still threaten even in the midst of the pandemic.

Penn's Weissman urged patience, saying that as each vaccine maker gets more experience, "I think every month they're going to be making more vaccine than the prior month." □

# Panel overturns 4 Facebook content takedowns in first ruling

BY KELVIN CHAN  
 AP Business News  
 LONDON (AP) — Facebook's quasi-independent oversight board issued its first rulings on Thursday,



In this April 14, 2020 file photo, the thumbs up Like logo is shown on a sign at Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, Calif. Associated Press

Facebook regularly takes down thousands of posts and accounts, and about 150,000 of those cases have appealed to the oversight board since it launched in November. The board is prioritizing for review select cases that have the potential to affect lots of users around the world. In its initial batch of rulings, the board ordered Facebook to restore posts by users that the company said broke standards on adult nudity, hate speech, or dangerous individuals.

overturning four out of five decisions by the social network to take down questionable content. The social media giant set up the oversight panel to rule on thorny issues about

content on its platforms, in response to furious criticism about its inability to respond swiftly and effectively to misinformation, hate speech and nefarious influence campaigns.

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Presidential unit at Casa Del Mar for week 1, room 1317. 2 bedroom, 2 bath, full kitchen, dining room, pool and fitness center. Asking \$16,000. Call USA, 845-239-2918 or email garyhudak684@comcast.net

### For Sale: Casa Del Mar

Presidential unit at Casa Del Mar for week 2, room 1511. 2 bedroom, 2 bath, full kitchen, dining room, pool and fitness center. Asking \$16,000. Call USA, 845-239-2918 or email garyhudak684@comcast.net.

### For Sale: Barcelo

All Inclusive. Prime week, studio deluxe unit. Sleeps 2. Cost of food and liquor package extra. Cost of ownership \$12,000. Call USA 845-239-2918 or email garyhudak684@comcast.net.

213673

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Week 2/1113 (16k);  
 Week 5/1315 (18k);  
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 Week 7&8/1408 (18k/Wk.);  
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213806

## Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

7		9			2			1
		4	6		8	5		3
1		7				6		
				5				
		3				4		2
3		6	2		5	9		
8			1			7		5

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

1/29

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## ARUBA TODAY

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**San Nicolas**  
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 Tel. 524 8833

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 Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002  
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Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
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Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

### General Info

Phone Directory Tel. 118

# Queen Latifah 'stoked' to land post-Super Bowl slot for show

By **BETH HARRIS**  
Associated Press

**LOS ANGELES (AP)**—Queen Latifah thrives on going big. From writing and rapping at the start of her career to being an Oscar-nominated actress to producing, she has upended expectations for years.

Her latest chapter comes in the new CBS series "The Equalizer" as the first Black woman to portray the role in the franchise.

The show debuts Feb. 7 in the coveted timeslot following the Super Bowl, typically the year's most-watched program. The series settles into its regular Sunday night slot on Feb. 14.

The football game offers the potential of a huge lead-in audience to introduce Latifah as Robyn McCall, an ex-CIA officer who uses her skills to defend those who can't help themselves while pursuing her own redemption. Her co-stars include Chris Noth, Lorraine Toussaint and Adam Goldberg.

The post-Super Bowl slot has provided monstrous ratings over the years for shows like "Friends," "Survivor" and "Undercover Boss."

"I'm so stoked that we're coming on after the Super Bowl," Latifah said Wednesday on a video call. "It was



This image released by CBS shows Queen Latifah in a scene from the series "The Equalizer," premiering after the Super Bowl on Sunday, Feb. 7.

a great boost for our crew that has been working really hard under difficult conditions. It just gave us all a boost around here and made us go even harder and work even harder." Latifah is getting her licks and kicks in on three sets built inside Meadowlands Arena in East Rutherford, New Jersey, her home state. The arena where fellow Jerseyites Bruce Springsteen and Frank Sinatra, as well as the NBA and NHL, once played closed in 2015 after nearly 40 years. Tax

credits from the state have helped lure TV and film projects to the sprawling site. "We're across the street from Giants Stadium, for cryin' out loud," said Latifah, a self-proclaimed "huge" football fan. The crime drama is being reimagined, following the original series from the 1980s with a white man (Edward Woodward) in the title role. That show spawned films in 2014 and 2018 starring Oscar winner Denzel Washington. "I did watch the original se-

ries as a kid," Latifah said. "What Denzel did with the feature films has been incredible. We wanted to do something different." Latifah's character is a divorced single mom to a teenage daughter. On the job, her character is strong, cool and skilled, but at home she's thrown off-balance. Debra Martin Chase, an executive producer on the show, said she believes Latifah is just the fourth Black woman to play the lead on an hour-long network dra-

ma, joining Teresa Graves, Kerry Washington and Viola Davis — all of whom were Golden Globe-nominated for their roles.

Latifah gets to cruise on a motorcycle (a passion in real life) and fight, something she and her brother learned as youngsters from their police officer-father.

"My father taught us how to fight at a young age, how to defend ourselves, taught us all these moves, and then told us never to use them unless you were defending your mother, your brother, you're sticking up for someone who's being bullied," she said.

While Latifah loves action and fighting, she doesn't go in for gratuitous violence. As an executive producer, her influence extends to all areas of the show.

"I want to see Robyn fight, not just with her hands, but with her brains. That's what you haven't seen enough of, particularly from Black women on television and in a lead role. We've been equalizing for centuries, from Hatshepsut to Stacey Abrams to Kamala Harris," she said.

Latifah added: "Hopefully, they'll start to say, 'Damn, Latifah is a badass.' The ego in me wants them to say that." □

Associated Press

# Dwayne Johnson is a contender in NBC sitcom 'Young Rock'



This combination of photos released by NBC shows, from left, Dwayne Johnson, left, and the actors who portray him in the comedy series "Little Rock," Adrian Groulx as Dwayne at 10, Bradley Constant as Dwayne at 15 and Uli Latukefu as Dwayne at 20. The series premieres on Feb. 16.

Associated Press

By **LYNN ELBER**  
AP Television Writer

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Dwayne Johnson's new NBC comedy "Young Rock" has him campaigning for president in 2032, but the actor and producer

sidestepped the possibility of a real-life run someday. A coming-of-age story inspired by the former pro wrestler's colorful but challenging childhood and youth, "Young Rock" is framed by the adult John-

son's reflections on his life as he stumps for office. Is Johnson cleverly preparing America for his next act? "I think the people will prepare me. I can say that," he replied with a laugh.

Using the candidacy as a device to revisit his past was suggested by Nahnatchka Khan, executive producer of "Young Rock," he told The Associated Press on Tuesday. Johnson also is an executive producer for the series, debuting Feb. 16, with his younger versions played by Adrian Groulx, Bradley Constant and Uli Latukefu.

"We were trying to figure out a creative way that I can be intertwined in every episode, to be part of it. This was (Khan's) idea, and at first I was a little reticent about it because it's political," he said. "You just knew that by the time the show was coming out, politics was gong to take yet another hard turn and be

so polarizing as it is." Khan's persuasive argument: "She said something to the effect of, 'Well, you always say you're a man of the people, and I think we should give it a shot,'" Johnson recounted. In a 2018 Vanity Fair interview, the film and TV star said he'd seriously considered a 2020 run for president but decided against it. □

7	3	9	5	4	2	8	6	1
6	8	5	7	3	1	2	9	4
2	1	4	6	9	8	5	7	3
1	5	7	3	2	4	6	8	9
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9	6	3	8	1	7	4	5	2
3	4	6	2	7	5	9	1	8
5	7	1	4	8	9	3	2	6
8	9	2	1	6	3	7	4	5

# With quarantines almost over, tennis set to start Down Under

By DENNIS PASSA  
AP Sports Writer

With a coronavirus-enforced quarantine coming to an end, the world's elite tennis players will go from two of the quietest weeks of their lives in Australia to three of the busiest.

The government-mandated quarantine ahead of the Feb. 8-21 Australian Open had a controversial start.

Some players complained bitterly after being forced into hard lockdown because passengers on their charter flights to Melbourne tested positive for COVID-19, and a letter from top-ranked Novak Djokovic to tournament officials offering his suggested rule changes sparked public backlash. The 14-day period of isolation for most players was scheduled to end from late Thursday and early Friday local time.

And with it came some plaudits from Serena Williams and Rafael Nadal.

"It's super, super strict . . . insane and super intense, but they are doing it right," Williams said of the quarantine in an interview with The Late Show's Stephen Colbert. "It's definitely hard with a three-year old (her daughter Olympia), but it's worth it because you want everyone to be safe."



In this Jan. 24, 2020, file photo, Serena Williams of the U.S. plays a shot to China's Wang Qiang in their third round singles match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia.

Associated Press

The No. 2-ranked Nadal told CNN that international tennis players needed to maintain a "wider perspective on what's going on in the world," although he sympathized with the 72 players who were deemed to be close contacts of positive coronavirus cases from three charter flights and who had to stay in their rooms for 24 hours a day and could not practice.

"When we came here we knew the measures were going to be strict," Nadal said. "We knew the country is doing great with the pandemic. Australia is probably one of the best examples in the world . . . how they react through very challenging times."

Indeed, Australia has done well.

Due to strict incoming traveler quarantines, limited movement between states and a previous hard lockdown of more than 4 million people in Melbourne when a second wave got out of control in Victoria state, Australia has had only 909 deaths attributed to COVID-19.

And 820 of them were in Victoria — most during that second deadly wave when overnight curfews were put in place and use of masks made compulsory outside of home.

There was some considerable doubt during that second wave whether the Australian Open would

even be remotely possible in Melbourne.

It was the only Grand Slam tournament not affected by coronavirus shutdowns last year, but only because it was held in January before the virus was declared a global pandemic in March. Among the other Grand Slam events, the French Open was delayed until late September, Wimbledon wasn't held at all and the U.S. Open instituted a bio-secure bubble for all players.

This year's Australian Open was delayed by three weeks to allow arriving players to spend those 14 days in quarantine. Players, coaches and officials were flown in on 17 jets chartered by Tennis Australia and met by biosecurity officials and placed immediately into hotel quarantine. Most players — those not on the three virus-affected charters — were allowed outside for five hours of practice daily.

And instead of having two or three weeks of warmup events, those tournaments have all been compressed into one week beginning Sunday — the ATP Cup men's team event, two other ATP tournaments and three WTA events.

One of the WTA events is only open to players

who were among those 72 forced into hard lockdown and who couldn't take advantage of the daily practice allocation. They include 2019 U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu, whose coach was among those who tested positive, and two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka.

Before the official tournaments begin, eight of the world's top players will take part in an Adelaide exhibition on Friday. Djokovic will play Jannik Sinner and Williams will take on Naomi Osaka in the day session. Nadal will play U.S. Open champion Dominic Thiem and No. 1-ranked Ash Barty plays Simona Halep in the night session.

It will be Barty's first tournament in 11 months. She decided not to defend her 2019 French Open title at the delayed event in Paris, and travel restrictions for Australian citizens attempting to leave the country made it difficult to travel anyway.

"Obviously I haven't played competition tennis for a year now so it's going to be a challenge," the 24-year-old Barty said. "So there's no stresses, no concerns for me. I know it's going to be a little bit rusty and that's OK." □

## TE Jason Witten says he's retiring again after 17th season

DALLAS (AP) — Jason Witten says he is retiring again, apparently for good this time. The longtime Dallas Cowboys tight end who spent his final season with the Las Vegas Raiders in 2020 told ESPN on Wednesday that he was walking away "knowing that for 17 seasons I gave it my absolute all."

The 38-year-old Witten, who didn't immediately return a message from The Associated Press, retired the first time after the 2017 season with Dallas to become an analyst for ESPN's "Monday Night Football." Witten said he started having second thoughts early in his TV tenure, and

he returned for a club-record 16th year with the Cowboys in 2019. Witten is also the franchise leader in games, starts, catches and yards receiving.

When coach Jason Garrett was let go after the Cowboys missed the playoffs amid high expectations a year ago, there wasn't a place on the roster for Witten.

The 11-time Pro Bowler joined several former Dallas teammates with the Raiders and had career lows with 13 catches for 69 yards. But Witten did score twice, giving him 74 career touchdowns.

A third-round pick out of Tennessee in 2003, Witten

ended his career fourth on the NFL career list with 1,228 catches. He's second among tight ends to Tony Gonzalez, who is also the only other tight end with more yards (15,127 to 13,046).

"As I hang it up, I walk away knowing that for 17 seasons I gave it my absolute all," Witten told ESPN, which reported he planned to retire as a Cowboy. "Football is a great game that has taught me many valuable lessons, and I look forward to passing on that knowledge to the next generation." Part of the reason Witten came out of retirement two years ago was



In this Jan. 3, 2021, file photo, Las Vegas Raiders tight end Jason Witten warms up for the team's NFL football game against the Denver Broncos in Denver.

Associated Press

he thought the Cowboys were good enough to make a run at his first Super Bowl. But the two-time

All-Pro never made it past the divisional round, and missed the playoffs in 11 of his 17 seasons. □

# Retirement age? Super Bowl coaches just getting started



This combination of file photos shows Kansas City Chiefs head coach Andy Reid, left, and Tampa Bay Buccaneers head coach Bruce Arians during NFL football games.

By **MARK LONG**  
AP Pro Football Writer

There's no retirement age in the NFL, and that's a good thing for Super Bowl-bound Kansas City and Tampa Bay. Andy Reid and Bruce Arians are two of the league's five oldest coaches. Reid is closing in on 63; Arians turned 68 last October. They have a combined 55 years of NFL experience and spent nearly another three decades working at the college level. Neither seems close to calling it a career. Instead, they're showing that bald heads and gray facial hair might be a better choice than young and spry at football's most important leadership position. These guys might just be getting started, too. Reid signed a six-year contract extension in November that could keep him with the Chiefs through 2025. Arians told a Tampa ra-

dio station Wednesday he plans to return in 2021 even if the Buccaneers beat Kansas City at home in the Super Bowl on Feb. 7. Arians was asked on WDAE-FM whether he would "ride off into the sunset" with a victory. "Hell, no!" he said. "I'm going for two. If the (owners) will have me back, I'll be back." Reid, who ranks fifth on the NFL wins list with 238, is in the midst of his eighth season in Kansas City after a long tenure in Philadelphia. He took over a team that was 2-14 before his arrival and built a consistent winner, one that has reached new heights under Super Bowl MVP quarterback Patrick Mahomes. "A guy like Patrick will keep you very, very young," Arians joked. Reid and the Chiefs are trying to become the first team in 16 years to win consecutive Super Bowls, joining an exclusive list of

dynasties that includes Green Bay (1967-68), Miami ('72-73), Pittsburgh ('75-76, '79-80), San Francisco ('89-90), Dallas ('92-93), Denver ('98-99) and New England (2003-04). "Growing up as an Eagles fan, I was able to cheer for a bunch of his teams," Cleveland coach Kevin Stefanski said. "He does an outstanding job with his team. And then, in particular the offense, he is a great technician in what he has his team do." "I have always respected how much they have evolved over the years and the different things that they do which are so different than what they were doing, you know, 20 years ago in Philadelphia. I just think so highly of him as a coach." There's little doubt that Reid's "throw to win" philosophy is the NFL model these days. The way he handles the locker room should pro-

vide another blueprint for success. "As a head football coach, you try to unite, make sure people have an opportunity to express their beliefs and feelings like you would around a dinner table but have an open forum and respect for one another," Reid said. "That's what 'team' is all about. "We all come from different places and it doesn't matter religion or color or anything else, we're humans and I think we have an opportunity to look at the best of each other. ... We all have strengths and weaknesses. Every human has that, their strength and weakness, and our objective as a football team is your strength is going to cover up my weakness; my strength will cover up your weakness and we go roll. So that's kind of how we do it here." Arians has been equally masterful in blending six-

**Associated Press**

time Super Bowl champion and three-time league MVP Tom Brady with a relatively young roster that includes off-the-street additions in tight end Rob Gronkowski, running back Leonard Fournette and receiver Antonio Brown. There was some speculation Arians might be on the verge of retirement. He stepped away following the 2017 season in Arizona due to medical concerns. After a year out of football, he returned with Tampa Bay in 2019 and then made a bold call to move on from overall No. 1 draft pick Jameis Winston. The Bucs signed Brady, now 43, to a two-year contract that created a small Super Bowl window. They made it happen by beating Washington, New Orleans and Green Bay on the road. Now, the Bucs get to face Kansas City at home — the first team in NFL history to play a Super Bowl in its normal venue. And the bald and bespectacled guys on either sideline will play a pivotal role in the outcome. Arians could make history, too. New England's Bill Belichick is the oldest coach to win a Super Bowl. He was 66 when the Patriots beat the Los Angeles Rams two years ago. "We have a cause and our cause is to put rings on our fingers," Arians said. "You do everything you can to reach that goal." Regardless of age. □

## Tampa's mayor issues outdoor mask order for Super Bowl



Fans social distance during an NFL football game between the Green Bay Packers and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers Sunday, Oct. 18, 2020, in Tampa, Fla.

**Associated Press**

**TAMPA, Fla. (AP)** — Anyone visiting Tampa's popular outdoor destinations for the Super Bowl will be required to wear a mask to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Tampa Mayor Jane Castor signed an executive order Wednesday saying masks must be worn outside while downtown, in neighborhoods around Raymond James Stadium — where the Super Bowl will be held — and in other tourist hotspots. The order says those who

are not wearing a mask can be cited with a "nominal civil infraction" that carries a penalty up to a \$500 fine. It will remain in place until Feb. 13 — nearly a week after the Super Bowl ends. There are a few exceptions, including children under 5. "We are incredibly excited to host a fun and safe Super Bowl here in Tampa — but we need everyone to do their part. We want fans to feel confident knowing that when they come out to celebrate Super Bowl

LV, they can do so safely in a city that takes this pandemic seriously," Castor said in a statement Thursday morning. There will be official game events around the city, including The Super Bowl Experience, which features live music, food, beverages and football-themed activities. That will be held at multiple parks along the 2.7-mile (4.3-kilometer) Tampa Riverwalk and it is one of the places where masks are required even outdoors. □